

UNCLASSIFIED

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Page: 1

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UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 KIGALI 01037 01 OF 02 101517Z
ACTION AF-01

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FM AMEMBASSY KIGALI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5908

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KIGALI 01037

STATE FOR AF/C AMBASSADOR RENDER

PEACE CORPS FOR IO JACK HOGAN AND AF SANDRA ROBINSON

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: AMGT, PREL, RW
SUBJECT: PEACE CORPS CLOSING IN RWANDA

1. SUMMARY: WE UNDERSTAND THAT PEACE CORPS WASHINGTON HAS DECIDED TO SUSPEND OPERATIONS IN RWANDA. DUE TO THE IMPORTANCE OF A PEACE CORPS PROGRAM TO THE OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF THE MISSION AND TO DEVELOPMENT IN RWANDA, WE PROPOSE THAT A DECISION ON THE STATUS OF THE PEACE CORPS PROGRAM BE POSTPONED UNTIL 3/31. END SUMMARY.

2. IN A PHONE CALL MONDAY, 3/7, PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR FOR AFRICA, SANDRA ROBINSON, INFORMED ME THAT A
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 KIGALI 01037 01 OF 02 101517Z
DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN ON FRIDAY, 3/4 TO CLOSE OUT PEACE CORPS OPERATIONS IN RWANDA. WHILE THE DECISION, INFLUENCED BY RECENT URBAN VIOLENCE IN RWANDA AS WELL AS THE DELAY IN SETTING UP TRANSITION INSTITUTIONS, SEEMED TO BE DEFINITIVE, MS. ROBINSON DID WELCOME MY VIEWS ON THE MATTER. I VALUE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COMMUNICATE THE COUNTRY TEAM PERSPECTIVE ON PEACE CORPS PRESENCE HERE. I ALSO

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 1

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: JOHN L. MILLS
DATE/CASE ID: 20 NOV 2002 200003723

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 1994KIGALI01037

Page: 2
Channel: n/a

Case Number: 200003723

APPRECIATE PEACE CORPS' DETERMINATION TO CONSIDER A PROGRAM FOR RWANDA NEXT YEAR SHOULD THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT IMPROVE.

PROGRAM VIABILITY

3. WE HAVE BEEN WORKING CLOSELY WITH PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR FINLEY TO PLAN A FUTURE PROGRAM, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ASSESSING ITS VIABILITY. WE BELIEVE THAT ANY DECISION REGARDING THE STATUS OF THE PEACE CORPS PROGRAM SHOULD TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ASSESSMENT INDICATORS DEVELOPED BY THE PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR AND THE EMBASSY. A STATUS REPORT BASED ON THESE INDICATORS WAS SENT TO PEACE CORPS WASHINGTON FOR COMMENT ON 2/16 WITH AN UPDATED VERSION SENT ON 3/4. WE BELIEVE THAT A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, THE EMBASSY AND PEACE CORPS WASHINGTON, BASED ON THESE INDICATORS, SHOULD HAVE TAKEN PLACE BEFORE A DECISION CLOSING THE PEACE CORPS PROGRAM WAS TAKEN.

4. IN THE UNITED STATES STRATEGY FOR RWANDA, PEACE CORPS HAS A CENTRAL ROLE TO PLAY THROUGH TRAINING AND

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 KIGALI 01037 01 OF 02 101517Z
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN REALIZING U.S. OBJECTIVES OF DEMOCRACY, GOOD GOVERNMENT AND ENTERPRISE PROMOTION. AT A TIME OF POLITICAL TRANSITION, ECONOMIC LIBERALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES, PEACE CORPS' POSITIVE ROLE IN MEETING U.S. OBJECTIVES FOR RWANDA IS SIGNIFICANTLY HEIGHTENED.

5. WE IN THE FIELD DID NOT REALIZE THAT 3/15 WAS PEACE CORPS WASHINGTON'S "DROP DEAD" DATE FOR A DECISION ON WHETHER OR NOT PEACE CORPS WOULD STAY IN RWANDA. WE WERE WORKING CLOSELY WITH PEACE CORPS ON THE INTERNAL PLANNING STAGES OF A SUMMER TRAINING PROGRAM.

SECURITY

6. THE EVENTS OF 2/20-23 WERE, INDEED, CAUSE FOR CONCERN, BUT THEY NEED TO BE PUT INTO THEIR PROPER

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 2

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 1994KIGALI01037

Page: 3
Channel: n/a

Case Number: 200003723

PERSPECTIVE. NO EXPATRIATES WERE TARGETED OR UNDER IMMEDIATE THREAT. UNAMIR WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE LOCAL SECURITY UNITS TO RESPOND APPROPRIATELY AND IN A TIMELY MANNER TO ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND VANDALISM. THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES ARE GAINING EXPERIENCE AND EXPANDING THEIR CAPACITIES TO DEAL MORE EFFECTIVELY IN PREVENTING OR MINIMIZING POTENTIAL VIOLENT SITUATIONS.

7. PEACE CORPS' TENTATIVE PLANS CALL FOR POSTING VOLUNTEERS IN TEACHING PROGRAMS ON THE KIGALI-BUTARE AXIS. THE ROAD IS PAVED AND COMMUNICATIONS ARE
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 KIGALI 01037 01 OF 02 101517Z
GOOD. UNAMIR WILL HAVE A FULLY STAFFED OFFICE IN BUTARE. UNAMIR HAS GIVEN ASSURANCES OF SECURITY AND EVACUATION ASSISTANCE TO ALL EXPATRIATES.

8. IF ANOTHER OUTBREAK OF URBAN VIOLENCE TAKES PLACE BEFORE 3/31, THIS WOULD INDICATE THAT UNAMIR DOES NOT HAVE THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL. A POSTPONEMENT OF THE PEACE CORPS PROGRAM FOR ANOTHER YEAR WOULD THEN BE IN ORDER.

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 01 KIGALI 01037 02 OF 02 101517Z
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UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 KIGALI 01037

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Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 3

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 1994KIGALI01037

Page: 4

Channel: n/a

Case Number: 200003723

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9. ONE OF THE MAJOR KEYS TO STABILITY IS THE
INSTALLMENT OF THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT. THE
PROCESS HAS TAKEN LONGER THAN ANTICIPATED. WE
BELIEVE, HOWEVER, ALL PARTIES ARE CLOSE TO A
NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. IF THIS SETTLEMENT DOES NOT
TAKE PLACE BEFORE 3/31, A POSTPONEMENT OF THE PEACE
CORPS PROGRAM WOULD BE IN ORDER.

CONCLUSIONS

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 KIGALI 01037 02 OF 02 101517Z
10. WE BELIEVE THAT PEACE CORPS WASHINGTON'S CONCERNS
ARE VALID, BUT HAVE TO BE SEEN IN CONTEXT OF THE
PEACE PROCESS UNDERWAY IN RWANDA. WE BELIEVE THAT
THREE MORE WEEKS WILL LET US ALL KNOW WHETHER THAT
PROCESS, WITH UNAMIR SERVING AS GUARANTOR, IS STILL
ON TRACK. WE HOPE THAT PEACE CORPS' DECISION TO
CLOSE OUT PROGRAM NOW MAY BE HELD IN OBEYANCE UNTIL
3/31. RAWSON

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Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 4

UNCLASSIFIED